

GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE BLIND STATE OF DELAWARE

May 4, 2018 MEETING MINUTES

Welcome and Call to Order: Chair Lloyd Schmitz welcomed everyone to the meeting. Recognizing a quorum, Lloyd called the meeting to order at the Smyrna Rest Stop at 5500 DuPont Pkwy. in Smyrna, DE at 10:00 am.

Roll Call

Council Members: Council Chair Lloyd Schmitz, Patti Addison, Ken Rolph, Jillian Queen, Pat Carzo, Deidre Morris, Absent: Kat Bottner.

DVI Staff: Elisha Jenkins, Director; Michele Hamilton, Shirley Bryson, Debra Bradl, Olu Ogunsola, Shirley Bryson, Melodye May, Rob Schmidlkofer, Phone: Erin Weaver

BEP: Wayne Marsh, Gary Pizzolo

Public: Mary Marsh, Rob Keller, Nancy Smith, Bill McCafferty

Minutes: Deidre Morris made a motion to accept the April 6, 2018 minutes with the correction of the spelling of Bill DeGraffenreid's name. Motion seconded by Jillian Queen. Motion carried. Minutes updated.

DVI Directors Report-Elisha Jenkins

The Division's Federal AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) Grant volunteers will begin their service at the Biggs building beginning Tuesday, May 1, and will serve through April 30, 2019. This Grant, in partnership with the Delaware School for the Deaf, will focus on addressing barriers to employment, training, and education for the deaf, blind, and deaf-blind student and adult populations with the focus of alleviating both current and future poverty throughout Delaware. Partnerships for this Grant have already been established with the Delaware Department of Labor and Department of Education who are currently working together to provide pre-employment transition services and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) services to students with barriers to employment; specifically with the goal of supporting all high school aged students with disabilities towards career pathways. The project is planned to commence in the fall of this year, and the Division for the Visually Impaired via the VISTA Grant will proudly be a part of this initiative. Continual updates on this project will be provided in future reports.

Independent Living Services:

On Friday April 20th, Low Vision Specialist Dr. Daniel Baruffi began to provide low vision examinations at the Milford Annex location. The location provides consumers with convenient access to examinations since Delaware Eye Institute in Rehoboth ceased to provide examinations last fall. Dr. Baruffi also brought his optician with him to fit patients with glasses. In addition to examining one patient, he also provided an educational session to agency teachers. Dr. Baruffi will see patients in the Milford Office every 3rd Friday from 8:00am – 11:45am.

On April 18th, Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Harold Webb exhibited at the 17th Annual 55+ Expo at Dover Downs. The event targeted older Delawareans and featured free health screenings, a wellness center, and caregiver resources. Many individuals participated in this well-attended event and asked questions regarding DVI services and programs. Literature about our Division's services was disseminated to the attendees.

Members of the Independent Living Unit provided sensitivity training to Delaware Hospitality School students on April 26, 2018. The purpose of the training was to educate the current staff and students of the adaptive techniques that individuals who are visually impaired must use to perform various tasks on a daily basis and expand venues for culinary arts training program.

The Older Blind Technical Assistance Team will be on-site on June 4-7, 2018. The Technical Assistance Team is

seeking participants for a focus group to discuss the program.

The Summer Academy will occur July 9-20th at Blindsight Delaware. This event is facilitated by DVI team members of ILS, VR, Technology and Orientation and Mobility. A host of activities and experiences are planned for participants.

The NFB BELL program is scheduled for July 30th-August 10th at Blindsight Delaware. DVI is pleased to support the NFBs program.

Workshops are recorded and posted on Social Media; efforts are underway to make the recording available on the website as well.

Events for Healthy Vision Month are as follows:

May 2- Ask the Eye Doctor!

May 2- DVI at UMC Kenton!

May 16th- Healthy Vision Family Night at the Delaware Children's Museum

May 18th-20th Beach House Weekend (Students)

May 25th - Paratransit Updates & Q/A!

Vocational Rehabilitation:

The VR team hosted Spring Break week in April. There were 11 participants. Activities included ILS skills, career exploration, Assistive Technology (the students really enjoyed the Amazon Echo) and a field trip to the NFB focused on STEM.

Two students were panelists in this year's Pathways to Employment Conference. Accolades have been received and shared with the students.

Staff participated in the Delaware Conference for the Deaf-Blind Helen Keller Learning Community. Resource information and materials will be disseminated to the deaf-blind individuals that we serve.

Instructional Resource and Materials Center:

The IRMC has met a major milestone with producing 500,000 braille pages.

Education Services:

At the most recent, Pennsylvania-Delaware Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired Conference, one of DVI's teachers for the visually impaired presented a session entitled "Do You Want to Play With Me" which focused on self-advocacy skills and how to adapt everyday games for students with visual impairments. In addition, one Orientation and Mobility Therapist led a discussion on "Focusing on the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Orientation & Mobility Instruction".

At DVI's April "Family Night", 12 participants gathered at the Biggs location to enjoy games and networking. The families from Kent and Sussex met at the DABA Bowling event in Milford on April 14th. The event was well attended.

The next Family Night is scheduled to take place on Friday, May 4, 2018 in both the New Castle (Biggs building) and Milford (Morris School) locations. The theme will be "Cinco de Mayo".

The Unified English Braille (UEB) public forums to seek stakeholder input regarding Delaware's UEB Implementation Plan will be held throughout the month. The UEB Plan will be submitted to the Department of Education on May 15th.

Delaware Industries for the Blind (DIB) - a question was submitted for an update. DIB has ceased operating and the Agency is working with the Office of Management and Budget with the State surplus process in the Delaware Code.

Business Enterprise Program-Rob Schmidlkofer

Outreach events in partnership with the technology unit are occurring. An event was held on May 2, 2018 at the United Methodist Church, in which there were Forty (40) individuals in attendance. Twenty (20) of the individuals disclosed that they had a visual impairment and may be contacting the Agency for services. The next one is scheduled for Monday, May 7, 2018 at the Ruitan Club in Kent County, these outreach events provide an opportunity to explain the Division for the Visually Impaired's services.

BEP vending machines: April's report shows a profit. November through March does not show a profit.

Smyrna Rest Stop: no new products were added. Working on acquiring product to be stocked for June.

DTCC: continues to have losses, currently no outside catering. Discussions continue on resuming outside catering. There are a number of challenges associated with this location. Discussion being made on possibly changing to a micro market. There is not a BEP operator associated with this location. Structural changes need to be made. The Blind Vendors committee continues to have discussions on ending the contact. BEP reported that currently they have no one in training or in a probation period. The Council members voted to make a recommendation to have the DTCC café contract terminated. Jillian Queen made the motion and seconded by Ken Rolph. Motion carried. This measure was symbolic.

Discussion on the elimination of the Division for the Visually Impaired- This was put on the Agenda by Lloyd Schmitz as he does not believe that the Division is meeting the needs for the Visually Impaired. He recommends that this should go to the Joint Sunset Committee for review. He would like to present his opinion to all the committees (VRAC, ILAC, BVC, Education committee, etc.) and advocates for the visually impaired and then for public comment. If this moves forward it will be handled through the Department of Health and Social Services or the Governor's office or a Legislator's Office. The question arose on how the Council quantify the agency's performance of their mission. Lloyd Schmitz stated that the council did not make a decision, this is just open for discussion. DVI does not at this time have any comments on this recommendation. Other attendees strongly recommended not moving forward with this action. It was recommended that DVI find the means to advertise the good work that is being done through DVI. The motion was made by Patti Addison to table this discussion, and second by Ken Rolph. Motion carried.

Public Comment- Members of the Public participated in the discussion above.

ADJOURNMENT- Jillian Queen made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ken Rolph. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by
Michele Hamilton